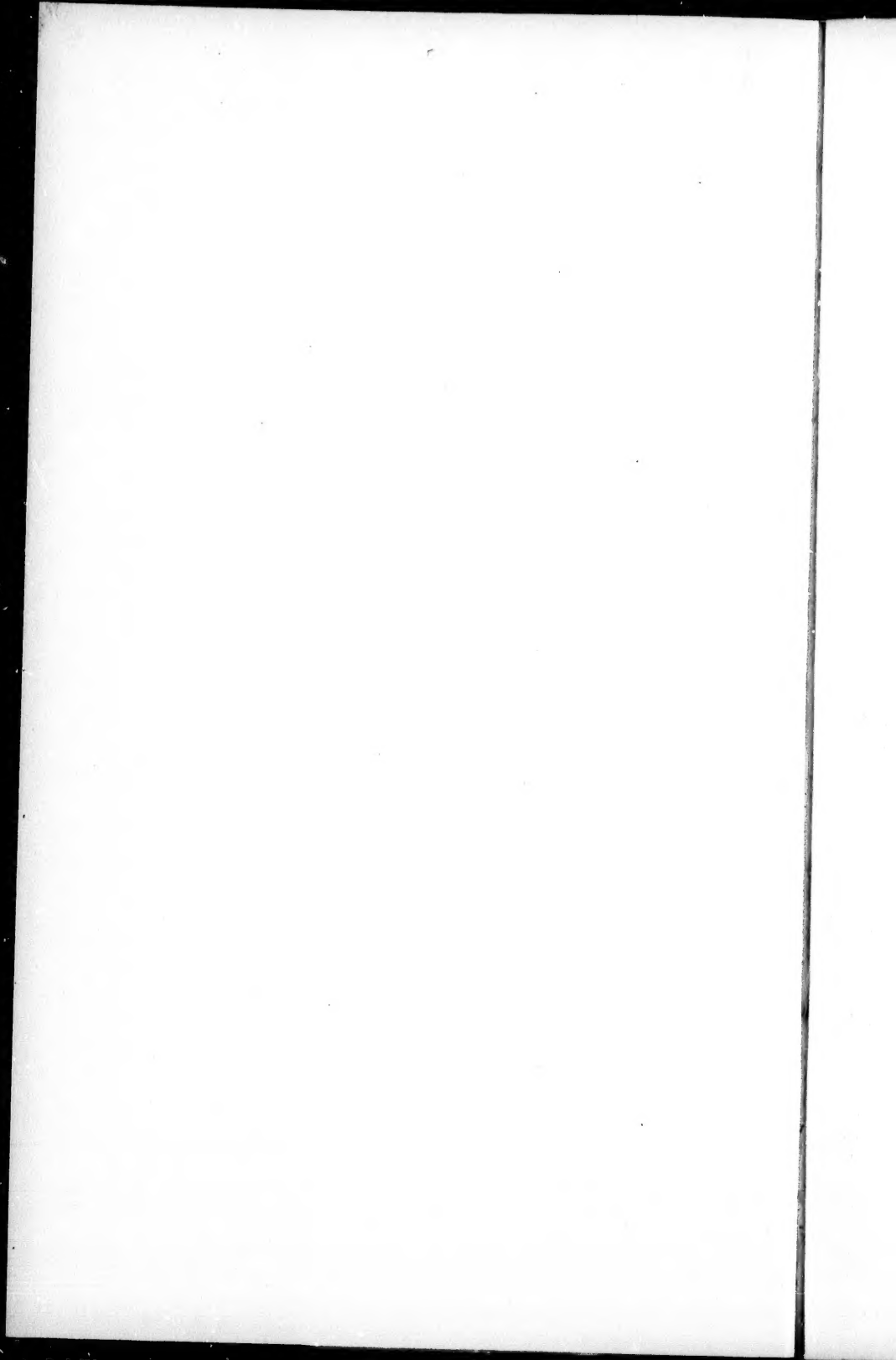




LETTER

TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE RIGHT HONORABLE

LORD ELGIN,

ON RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT,

As applied simply to the Province of Canada;

TOGETHER WITH HIS LORDSHIP'S

CELEBRATED SPEECH,

Delivered in the House of Commons, as Lord Bruce, in 1841,

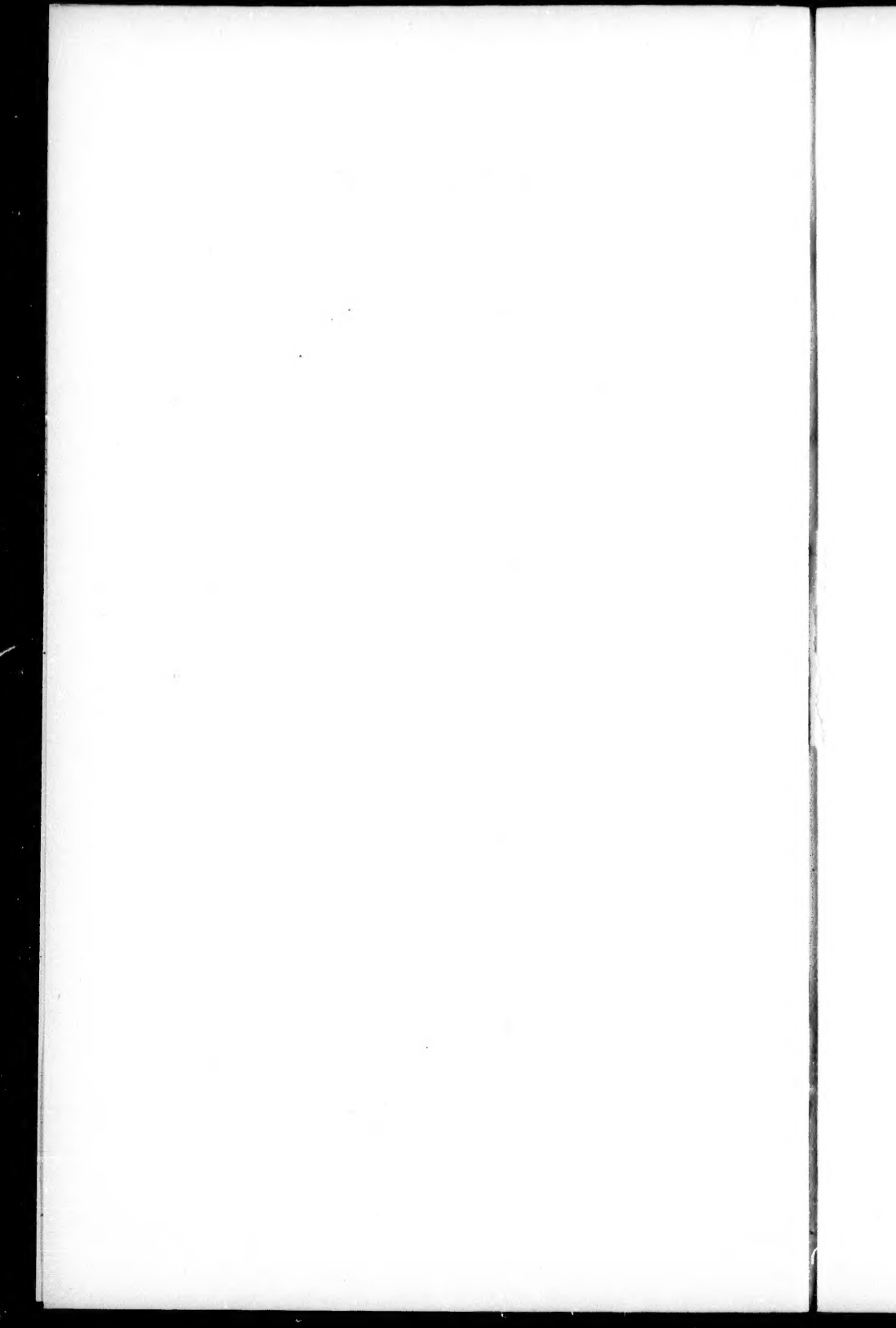
DEPRECATING, IN THE STRONGEST TERMS, ALL APPOINTMENTS TO
OFFICE BY A TOTTERING MINISTRY, NOT ENJOYING
THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PEOPLE.

BY FUIMUS.

MONTREAL:

PRINTED BY DONOGHUE & MANTZ, 142, NOTRE DAME STREET.

JANUARY, 1847.



LETTER.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE RIGHT HON. JAMES BRUCE,
EARL OF ELGIN AND KINCARDINE, &c.

MY LORD,

Although at a humble distance, I follow in the train of those who have been most prominent in hailing Your Lordship's advent to these fatal shores. Yes, My Lord, fatal—because, although now indulging in the early honeymoon of enjoyment of the Vice-Regal dignity, you will but too soon discover that the mantle of Nessus was not more deadly in its effects on the great cleanser of the Augean Stable, whose example Your Lordship will be called upon to imitate, than is the cloak of Responsible Government which, hitherto worn by Your Lordship's predecessors in this Colony, has at length been bequeathed to you. Some of these, it is true, have won to themselves enduring fame and honor, while others have covered themselves with contempt and scorn; but, never, with one solitary exception only—an exception scarcely meriting to be classed as such, has the subtle poison failed to insinuate its baneful influence into the system it has finally prostrated.

But, My Lord, notwithstanding this—notwithstanding the melancholy forebodings which assail me, and the unmitigated disgust with which I view the attempts, already made to fatten you with adulation; and that by those who will not scruple, later, to offer you up a sacrifice on the obscene altar of their censure,

I must pause a moment to permit myself to add my humble, but certainly not less sincere, welcome not only to Your Lordship, but, in anticipation, to your young and favored Bride—the graceful scion of a noble House, whose destiny it is to revisit a theatre not wholly unknown to her for its spirit of turbulence, and therefore, in all probability, not too favorably remembered.

As the Address, recently presented to Your Lordship, had, long before your arrival, predicated your journey to have been tedious and fatiguing, it would ill become me to assume that its clairvoyant framers could have been wrong in their assertion; or, that Your Lordship has derived the slightest interest or novelty from the contrast afforded by the chaste, white, frost-work of a Canadian winter, so philosophically analyzed by Sir Francis Bond Head, in his “Emigrant,” as compared with the blistering heat of that burning clime where Your Lordship has often, at this very epoch of the year, beheld the land wearing the semblance of a bed of emerald rising from the blue bosom of the waveless sea. Not being desirous, therefore, to disturb their verdict—to impugn the dictum of the Address,—I beg respectfully to add, to my gratulation at Your Lordship’s safe arrival in Canada, my most unfeigned concern at the great hardships I suppose I must assume Your Lordship to have experienced.

But, My Lord, while to this I add the meed of welcome, and, with becoming deference, wish Your Lordship every happiness life can bestow, it is with much the same melancholy feeling with which a Howard hangs over the couch of the patient whom, struck, in the full vigor of youth and beauty, by some deadly yet lingering disease, he knows to be foredoomed to destruction; or, to offer another illustration which must be equally familiar to Your Lordship, with the same sentiments of concern with which the physician visits the bedside of the victim to that pestilence which

rages periodically in the scene of your former Government, and charitably wishes him that speedy recovery of which he himself entertains not the shadow of a hope. I may wish Your Lordship happiness, and exemption from all those ills which have assailed your predecessors, but well do I know that wish is vain. Your Lordship's Sisyphus-like task has begun, and unless that energy and decision of character, of which Your Lordship's earlier initiation into public life gives every fair promise, be exerted in an extraordinary degree, the humblest of Your Lordship's Scottish dependants will have no reason to look with envy on the trappings which adorn your office.

And firstly, My Lord, beware of the oily-tongued hypocrite. Beware of the reviler of the just, and the good, and the benevolent, and the virtuous. Among those who have bent the knee and greeted Your Lordship's arrival with bland and approving smiles—smiles assumed only to cover the selfishness of their own black hearts—are those who, like Judas Iscariot, betrayed their master, not for thirty pieces of silver, but in consideration of that which was to them far more precious than silver. Among them, My Lord, are those who became the bitter enemies of their master,—a master whom all good and honest men had been taught to venerate and love; and their hatred of him, violent as the hatred of the detected and discomfited traitor ever is, has not been suffered to slumber even over the place of his sepulture. Yea, while his bones lie mouldering into dust, the venom of their hearts still goes forth; and yet these men, My Lord, have dared to approach, and insult you with welcome, when, if the occasion should serve hereafter, they will scruple not to sacrifice your good name in the same manner, and without the slightest remorse or reserve, on the same altar of infamy.

Your arrival in Canada, My Lord, happens at an eventful period. It occurs at a moment when the adaptation of the principle of Responsible Government, familiar to Your Lordship in its harmonious working at home, has had the fullest and fairest test in all its relations and bearings to a colony, and yet been found wanting. By one of Your Lordship's penetration, it will not be difficult to discover that, in Canada, all the evils that can spring from the system are to be met with, while few of its benefits are anywhere manifest. The reason need scarcely be pointed out to a statesman so capable of separating the gold from the dross ; but as other eyes will peruse this letter, as well as those of Your Lordship—and, however unworthy of adoption the suggestions it contains may be found, they at least cannot fail to command the attention of one who is disposed to seek for information from whatever source it may be derived—it may not be without advantage to explain for the benefit of the ignorant many. In England, men of high and independent minds and ample means alone, are summoned to rule the destinies of the great empire it is their brightest glory to govern with success. Baseness and dishonesty of purpose are unknown to them. While they can retain office with honor to themselves, and advantage to the country, they are ever proud to lay their services at the feet of the Sovereign ; but the moment the public confidence in them is shaken, and its expression evidenced through the proper channel, they are content to relinquish the reins of power into the hands of their successors, and, jealous only of any accusation of disregard of the public interests, view with indifference the mere pecuniary sacrifices involved in their loss of office. Not so in Canada. Principle and integrity are sacrificed on the altar of self-interest, and arts are practised, subterfuges had recourse to, which in England would be spurned with

indignation, as dishonoring to the man—as unworthy of the politician.

And wherefore this difference, My Lord ? Because, as has just been stated, men of high principle and independent means are called to the councils of the Sovereign ; whereas, on the contrary, in Canada, all men are, with a very few isolated exceptions, comparatively necessitous—unavoidably necessitous from their position as colonists, the artificers of their own fortunes, and filled with the avaricious desire to add to a wealth which has been attained by the sweat of their brows ; in lieu of being actuated by those high sentiments which distinguish the English gentleman and statesmen. ready ever to sacrifice personal interest to the public good.

And what, My Lord, is the result of this ? Iniquities the most shameful, corruption the most barefaced, even worse than those which were said to have prevailed during the days of Old Sarum, and which were wholly swept away by the purifying besom of the Reform Bill, have been perpetrated in Canada from the moment of the first introduction into the country of a system which was intended to subserve to the common good ; certainly not to produce the demoralizing effects which, under unskilful and weak Governors, have sprung from it. Dating from the moment of Lord Sydenham's first United Parliament, the same system of disgraceful tampering with principle, and enlisting support, no matter at what sacrifice of public honor or honesty, has been put in practice. Bills have been introduced and passed through the Legislature, less for their public utility, than because they enabled these vicious Administrations to bestow rewards upon those of their supporters who were immediately interested in their success. To secure and fortify their own doubtful position, has ever been the desire and the practice of the Responsible

Administrations, and Parliamentary influence has been their watchword; not the open, fearless, and dignified appeal to the understanding, which, in all cases of difficulty, is resorted to by those whom they effect to imitate, but bribery of a nature so undisguised that there is scarcely an adult in the province who does not penetrate the flimsy veil with which it is sought to be enshrouded, and suffer morally from the example.

Another evidence, My Lord, of the utter inapplicability of the practice of Responsible Government to the limited extent of country in which it prevails, and in short to a colony at all, when unrestricted by certain limitations and reservations, such as were boldly and nobly announced by the late Lord Metcalfe, is the great disunion, the deplorable division which each Administration has, under the system, created between large masses of the population, and which, even amid all the abuses said to have existed before the rebellion, had not attained one tithe of the extent to which it has since been carried.

That the evils which prevail, and which, before your Lordship shall have been a fortnight in the province, will have been sufficiently brought under your notice by the press of the country, as well as by individual and interested parties, are the result of the system, and not merely a consequence of the peculiar bent of men's minds, will at once be obvious from the fact that every Administration—Conservative and Radical—have practised the very same means of arriving at the *ultima thule* of their political strategy, the final goal to which tends all their petty manœuvring—namely, the strengthening of their position in office. Justice has been trampled under foot, every principle of public faith violated, in the fetid thirst to arrive at that sole and undivided end. The only difference has been that the Radicals, somewhat more honest than their adversaries, have ever been more regardful of

their friends and supporters, and scorned to desert them in the hour when they no longer needed them ; while such Conservatives as have hitherto been in power, have, with heartless insincerity and without scruple, sacrificed their political friends whenever such a step was deemed necessary to secure their own political existence. But these enormities, whenever or by whomsoever perpetrated, are certain to meet with a just retribution. While the Radicals were in power, there was at least union in their own ranks—that union which gave them a strength, of which their own manifest folly alone deprived them. This was a result of the consistency of the course they pursued in preferring to bestow rewards on their friends, rather than on their enemies. The present Conservative Administration have, on the contrary, succeeded in disgusting all parties ; and this cannot be better evidenced to your Lordship than by the knowledge you will have even already obtained of the disunion which prevails among them, and has for months past sunk them as a political body in the public estimation. They wear the trappings of authority, but are, at best, a skeleton.

Thus, My Lord, it will be seen that, of all these several Administrations, not one more than the present has contrived to weaken its hold upon the public confidence, and particularly upon the support of those who have ever advocated the principles by which they retain their seats in the Cabinet, and by whose exertions they were unfortunately placed in a position to commit greater wrongs even than their predecessors. Released from that wholesome restraint, which was placed on its acts by the firm and sagacious minded Lord Metcalfe, the administration has passed even the bounds of common decency, in its vain struggles to preserve an existence which it continues to drag, amid public scorn and public indignation, but which, be assured My Lord, the Representatives of the Canadian

people will sever with their breath, even in the opening days of the coming Parliament, should *their* plausible explanations of the real state of feeling in the country, induce Your Lordship to weaken your own power, by suffering them, as they are now constituted, to meet those Representatives—released, it is repeated, from that wholesome restraint which had previously compelled it into a course of comparative justice—this same Administration has not scrupled to enact the part of a Ministry Your Lordship once most strongly condemned for pursuing the same reckless and offensive course, and *that*, even while conscious of their inefficiency to bolster up a power which they knew must bend, and ultimately break beneath the pressure of public opinion, thereby depriving Your Lordship of what little patronage was left, at the period when the announcement of Your Lordship's assumption of the reins of Government in Canada was made known—namely, the right of nomination to the few offices which were still undisposed of.

If, My Lord, Mr. Draper, as the leader of the present Canadian Administration, knew anything of the proceedings of the Imperial Parliament, he could not have been ignorant that the course he was pursuing was in direct opposition to Your Lordship's expressed reprehension of the unfitness and indelicacy of the measure. If he did not know this—if he had never seen Your Lordship's recorded protest—a protest which will now, and for the first time, be read by thousands of the people of Canada—he evinces an absence of acquaintance with that which ought to be his guide—the practice and proceedings of the House of Commons—which does not seem to render him the most competent person to head an Administration, professedly carrying through the enlarged views of Responsible Government, as understood at home. In acting, therefore, as he has done, Mr. Draper has placed himself between the horns of a dilemma, from

which all his acknowledged ingenuity will be found insufficient to extricate him successfully.

Your Lordship will, doubtless, have much to contend against in forming an accurate judgment, between the conflicting representations of those whose views are so obviously opposed. To decide, in favor of the one, will be to call down upon Your Lordship's head the bitter hostility of the other. For this soon or late Your Lordship must be prepared. It has been the fate of every Governor in this party-ridden and discontented Province, from the first establishment of British rule in it. It weighs like an incubus upon all prospective moral or physical improvement, and may be likened to a Pandora's box, left behind for the annoyance of her conquerors, on the final abandonment of the country by France. If your Lordship would therefore steer clear of the Scylla and Charybdis which will soon be found to beset your onward course, it can only be by steadily following in the wake of Lord Metcalfe. Have the courage—the firmness, to be the head, and not a mere excrescence of your own Government, and forego not those privileges of statesmanship of which Your Lordship has at an earlier period of public life, given earnest, yet of which the people of this Colony, who look upon Your Lordship as being merely possessed of the credentials of a Jamaica Government, have no knowledge.

But if, My Lord, the same uncompromising hostility to those principles of Government which the Home Ministry approve, and which it may be the instructions, not less than the wish of Your Lordship should prevail in Canada, be exhibited in insulting taunt and reckless invective, then will it be perfectly competent to Your Lordship to adopt that step which will have a tendency to check the insolent assumption—namely, to recommend, in the most urgent manner, to the Imperial Government, that the grand and compendious views of your noble connexion, the late Earl

of Durham, and partly advocated in a recent publication from the pen of a well known political writer in Nova Scotia, be, without further delay, adopted. Such a course cannot fail to be attended by a total change in the animus of Canadian politics; and the sooner such change be effected, the better for the interests and prosperity of the country Your Lordship is here to govern. Although the Home Government may not feel inclined to provoke the clamor which would be created by a certain party in the Province, by the withdrawal of privileges which the experience of six years has proved to be wholly unsuited to a Colony, possessing none of the proper germs from which can spring the requisites necessary to the perfection of Responsible Government, it is wholly within their power to give to its working a more enlarged field of operation, and, by adopting the grand Union of the British North American Provinces, as suggested by the noble Earl to whom I have already alluded, to strike at the root of all those party jealousies and heart-burnings, which are deducible chiefly from the present limitation of the system.

Not intending, My Lord, that these general remarks, which will be followed by other truths it may be expedient Your Lordship should be made acquainted with, at the outset of your career, should form more than a mere introduction to Your Lordship's argumentative speech in the House of Commons in 1841, in which will be found strong ground of condemnation of the conduct of the present Administration, as well as enlarged and liberal commercial views, which cannot fail to prove highly gratifying to the trading community of this Province,

I have the honor to be,

My Lord,

With profound respect,

Your Lordship's most obt. servt.

FUIMUS.

LORD ELGIN'S SPEECH.

SPEECH OF LORD BRUCE IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,
IN 1841, SECONDING MR. WORTLEY'S AMENDMENT TO
THE ADDRESS IN ANSWER TO HER MAJESTY'S SPEECH.

As the representative of an important commercial town, daily increasing in population, trade, and wealth, and destined ere long to engross a considerable share of the import trade of the country, I feel it to be my duty to avail myself of the first opportunity of declaring to the House, that, widely as my constituents differ from those of my honorable friend who has moved the amendment, in respect of local interests and sympathies, they must cordially concur with them in adopting, to the fullest extent, the sentiments embodied in that amendment, which has just been read to the House. As the amendment purports to express our sympathy with the resolution passed in the late House of Commons, a resolution declaring a want of confidence in Her present Majesty's Ministers, it is not unbecoming in a new Member, insignificant and humble though he be, to take a prominent part in support of that amendment. By the fate of this amendment, it is quite clear that the extent of the sympathy of this House with the vote of last session will be correctly ascertained; and I think that both sides of the House will admit that, in the present state of affairs, it will not be fitting or desirable to proceed to the consideration of any other matter until the extent of that sympathy is ascertained; until the effect of the dissolution has been clearly seen; until it is shown whether

the verdict of the country has cancelled or confirmed the judgment which the late House of Commons pronounced against the present Ministers. After the recapitulation which has been made by my honorable friend of the grounds on which the House is justified in withholding its confidence from Her Majesty's present advisers, it will be quite unnecessary for me to trespass at any length on the attention of the House ; but there are one or two points on which I will trouble the House with a few words.

And, first, I refer to the manifesto which the Noble Lord, the Secretary for the Colonies, thought proper to address, recently, to his new constituents. In that manifesto the Noble Lord has made a very important admission. It was published without hesitation or reserve ; and, from the style, from the avidity with which it was seized and commented upon by the partizans of the Noble Lord, it has all the character and appearance of anything but an ephemeral production. The Noble Lord, in that document, has made the admission that the late dissolution of Parliament has turned out a failure, and that a majority has been returned unfavorable to Her Majesty's Government. I am prepared to admit that, in ordinary cases, success can be no great criterion of merit ; but if there ever was a case in which the converse of this proposition was true ; if ever there was a case in which failure was a proof of incapacity, or, perhaps, something worse, it is an occasion like the present, when the responsible advisers of a constitutional Monarch, labouring under the stigma of a vote of censure, passed by a House of Commons elected under their own auspices, have counselled the Monarch to appeal to the constituent body, and are utterly incapable of recovering their position. I do not question the prerogative of the Crown ; on the contrary, I wish that prerogative to be free and unfettered. The Ministers who tender -

ed this advice to the Sovereign could only be justified on the hypothesis that the judgment they were unsatisfied with would be reversed by the popular voice. But the result has shown that this expectation was altogether fallacious ; and the advice thus given having signally failed of its object, can now only be regarded as an additional proof of the incapacity of those who offered it, and as aggravating the weight of the charges to which they have already subjected themselves. I admit that, before the Noble Lord addressed his constituents, the Ministers of the Crown might, with some appearance of justification, say that they did not, up to the present moment, possess any means of ascertaining the sense of Parliament upon their conduct and principles ; but the Noble Lord had the manliness not to avail himself of any such subterfuge. He frankly acknowledged that they had been defeated by an overwhelming majority. After that admission, a thrill of astonishment and dismay passed through the nation when it was ascertained that, notwithstanding the position in which Ministers found themselves, the stream of dignities and emoluments continued swelling forth, and flowed as copiously as, if not more profusely than, at any preceding period. It will be recollected that the Noble Lord, when he issued his manifesto, issued it under very peculiar circumstances. The Noble Lord stated that he wished to ascertain what the general state of those returns would prove, in order that he might be guided in the course he would recommend Government to pursue ; but, after ascertaining this fact, did the Noble Lord say that he repented of the advice he had already given, or that he regretted having stirred up the foundations of society frivolously, and to no effect ? Did the Noble Lord consider the sufferings of the poor operatives of Bolton and elsewhere, which were considerably aggravated by the general stagnation of their trade, consequent

upon the continued discussions of those abortive propositions? Did the Noble Lord say that the only reparation which he could make under the circumstances was, to surrender into the hands of the Sovereign the trust which he had held, with a request that she should confide that trust to some other person more capable of discharging the duties of this office? Did the Noble Lord ever intimate that he continued to hold office with a view of only retaining the semblance of power, but that he would not exercise the functions of power except where it might be absolutely necessary? No; the *Gazette* of every day gives the lie to such a notion. The Ministry, in every night's *Gazette*, undauntedly show that they are prepared to meet the majority of this House; and I must be allowed to say, if any inconvenience arises to the public service from the anomalous position of parties in this House, if any inconvenience should arise from the Government being defeated by an amendment upon their own Address, the blame must rest upon their own shoulders. This, indeed, is an anomalous case, and I believe in the whole history of England there is but a single example of a similar one.

Independently of the general expression of want of confidence in Ministers, which is the corner stone of the amendment, there are one or two points on which I wish briefly to remark. The first is, that the amendment coincides with the Address as to the necessity of adopting measures to avoid a deficiency in the revenue. To that extent the amendment and the Address agree: but I cannot concur with the Address in ascribing the whole of the deficiencies which have occurred to the causes therein specified; I cannot concur with the Address in stating that necessary expeditions, undertaken in defence of the national honor, have been the sole cause of those deficiencies; for I believe that inconsiderate and reckless expenditure at

home has very much aggravated the evils complained of in both the Address and the amendment ; and one great corroboration of this belief may be found in the enormous increase which has taken place of late years in the miscellaneous estimates. I cannot admit that this increase of expenditure ought to be made the stepping stone for the introduction of a new commercial and financial system, unless that new system have been proposed and approved of on its own merits. The Government have had recourse to this cry for free trade, in order to hide their own mismanagement, and to enable them to inveigh against those who cannot adopt the cry, as enemies to the people ; but the attempt has signally failed throughout the country. I do not conceive that my sentiments upon free trade are at all compromised by the part which I have felt it my duty to take in the late general election, or by the step which I have taken of seconding the amendment. I have always been an advocate of the principles of free trade, as those doctrines were propounded by Mr. Huskisson,—for free trade, based on substantial reciprocity, and applied with a just and discriminating regard to those interests which have grown up under a former system ; and to all the parties interested in the safe application of these doctrines, the parties most nearly interested are the laboring population.

A great deal has been said by gentlemen on the other side of the House of the benefit which the landowners and the capitalists may derive from the application of free trade to corn. I do not propose, on this occasion, to enter into that subject ; but I will just say that whatever benefit the landowners may derive from a change, unless it can be shown distinctly what would become of that portion of the labouring classes who would be thereby deprived of their ordinary employments, I, for one, would not listen to arguments merely

applying to the interests of other classes. I quite agree that landlords may derive advantage from the increased value of their properties, by having factories and spinning mills built upon them. It is true that capitalists may withdraw their capital from what appears a sinking concern, and apply their capital productively elsewhere. But what are those to do whose only capital is their labour and skill in their own particular employment. It is a mockery and a fallacy to tell such men, when deprived of their present productive employment, that they may find satisfactory occupation elsewhere. This leads me to say that I sympathise, from the bottom of my heart, with another expression of the amendment, which coincides with the Address: I mean that part which assures Her Majesty, "that in the gracious expression of her deep sympathy with those of her subjects who are now suffering from distress and want of employment, we recognise an additional proof of Her Majesty's tender regard for the welfare of her subjects." I believe that a regard for the interests of the laboring classes forms the great and paramount reason for proceeding warily in the application of the principle of free trade. In referring to this subject, I cannot but advert to the harsh, severe, and unjust terms in which it has been the fashion to designate those who take an opposite view of those questions, which are supported by Her Majesty's Government. In a day when monopoly of all kinds is denounced, I may be permitted to say that, of all monopolies, the most intolerable and odious is, the pretension to a monopoly of public virtue; and never has that pretension been advanced with a worse grace than when it is advanced by those who, but an hour, a little moment ago, might have been classed among those on whose selfish, unreasonable, and ungenerous adherence to monopoly they now cast reproach.

There is just one other subject on which I beg to occupy the attention of the House for a moment. I have observed, in the general tenor of the observations made by Ministers, and that portion of the press by which they are supported, especially since the result of the general election became known, that a studied and elaborate attempt has been made to recapitulate every probable difficulty and danger which the Right Honorable Baronet the Member for Tamworth will have to encounter in the present posture of affairs, if he should be called on to administer the government of this nation. When I first read these statements with regard to the disordered condition of the finances, and the danger by which we are beset at home and abroad, it struck me that those who put them forth, and their abettors, must have contemplated such statements with deep and poignant regret and self-reproach; and I should have attributed such sentiments to them, if I had not perceived an undue current of exultation running through all their representations. Whatever feelings may be excited by those statements, I trust that the Right Honorable Baronet, upon the hypothesis which those persons choose to assume, will, conscious of his high destiny of being called on to extricate this country from its embarrassments, conscious of the high hopes entertained of him, and of the general confidence reposed in him by all classes, as manifested by the zeal and alacrity with which they came forward at the late general election;—I trust that the Right Honorable Baronet, considering all these circumstances, will be able to face such difficulties, whatever they may be—not in a spirit of presumptuous defiance, not with the pretension of empiricism, but with a sincere reliance on the good sense, honesty, and fairness of the people of this country; and, still more, with a constant reliance on the kind support of that Providence which, ever

watchful over the destinies of Britain, will carry her through her difficulties if she continue true to herself, and will ever guide her in the path of honor. And whenever the period shall arrive—and I trust it is far distant—when, in the course of nature, the Right Honorable Baronet must resign his trusts, I believe he will leave to his successor a very different legacy from that left by the now-existing Ministry: I trust he will bequeath to them a flourishing Exchequer, prosperity of trade, peace at home, honor abroad, and a happy and contented people. I will not further occupy the time of the House, but will conclude by seconding the amendment which has been proposed by my honorable friend.

THE END.

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